GOP Hits Post for 'Hearsay'

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News Stories On Sabotage Held Malicious

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In separate attacks yesterday, President Nixon's campaign manager and press secretary accused The Washington Post of printing "hearsay," "innuendo," and "unsubstantiated charges" in its coverage of the Watergate bugging case and what federal investigators describe as a related campaign of extensive spying and sabotage against the Democrats.

In a prepared statement read to reporters, Clark MacGregor, the President's campaign manager, said: ". . . The Post has maliciously sought to give the appearance of a direct connection between the White House and the Watergate—a charge which The Post knows—and a half a dozen investigations have found—to be false."

At the daily White House briefing Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler was asked to respond to reports in The Post and Time magazine linking both a top White House aide and President Nixon's personal lawyer to a man who federal investigators say engaged in sabotage against the Democrats.

"I will not dignify with comment stories based on hearsay, character assassination, innuendo, guilt-by-association," said Ziegler. "That is the White House position; that is my position."

Neither MacGregor nor Ziegler would discuss the substance of any of The Post's reporting, or of the reports by other media.

In a statement issued last night, Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor of The Post said: "Time will judge between Clark MacGregor's press releases and The Washington Post's reporting of the various activities of the Committee for the Re-election of the President.

"For now it is enough to say that not a single fact contained in the investigative reporting by this newspaper about these activities has

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been successfully challenged." Bradlee added:

"MacGregor and other high administration officials have called these stories 'a collection of absurdities' and The Post 'malicious,' but the facts are on the record, unchallenged by contrary evidence."

MacGregor's attack on The Post was made to reporters who were called to a press conferense at whilh Nixon committee officials had said he would answer questions about the lateest reports stemming from the Watergate investigation.

But MacGregor refused to answer questions, citing "the unusual developments of the past few days." He read a three-page statement, two of them devoted to The Washington Post.

Referring to The Post's publication of the Pentagon Papers and the indictment of seven men who allegedly conspired to bug the Democrats' Watergate headquarters, MacGregor said:

"While The Post itself openly an dactively collaborated in the publication of stolen top secret documents of the government of the United States 16 months ago—today, it is faking shock and outrage at some obvious volunteers who were allegedlf spfing on (former Democratci National Chairman) Larry O'Brien."

In his statement, MacGregor accused The Post of "hypocrisy" and a "celebrated double standard (that) is today visible for all to see." He then referred to "unproven charges

by McGovern aides, or Sen. Muskie, about alleged campaign disruptions, while proven facts of opposition-incited disruptions of the President's campaign are buried deep inside the paper." MacGregor's statement asked:

"Why hasn't The Washington Post investigated" incidents of fire damage and window-breaking at Nixon campaign headquarters in six cities.

The Washington Post is investigating the incidents.

Neither Ziegler nor MacGregor mentioned Time magazine or The New York Times in their charges. Both publications this week also reported on the alleged spying and sabotage campaign.

In addition, Republican National Chairman Sen. Robert Dole of Kansas attacked the Post yesterday saying:

"For the last week the Republican Party has been the victim of a barrage of unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations by George McGovern and his partnership-in-mud-slinging, The Washington Post."

"In the final days of this campaign," Dole continued, "like the desperate politicians whose fortunes they seek to save, The Washington Post is conducting itself by journalistic standards that would cause mass resignations on principle from the Quicksilver Times," a local underground newspaper.

The Post stories in the last week have included reports that:

• FBI agents have determined that the Watergate bugging was only a part of a massive campaign of political spying and sabotage conducted on behalf of President Nixon's campaign and White House aides.

• Ken W. Clawson, White House deputy director of communications, was reported to have told a Post reporter that he fabricated the so-called "Canuck" letter, generally credited with damaging the New Hampshire primary campaign of Sen. Edmund Muskie (D-Maine). Clawson denied making the statement and said he had no prior knowledge of the letter.

• Donald H. Segretti, a California lawyer, reported to President Nixon's appointments secretary, Dwight L. Chapin, on his spying and sabotage activities, which included the disruption of the campaigns of Democratic presidential candidates during the primaries.

• President Nixon's personal attorney, Herbert W. Kalmbach, was one of five persons close to the President who was authorized to approve payments from the Nixon campaign's special intelligence-gathering fund used to finance the spying and sabotage.

Federal sources have said that the spying staged by the Nixon forces was apparently unprecedented in scope and seriousness.

They said it included surveillance of members of the Democratic candidates' families, fabricating letters and distributing them under the candidates' letterheads, leaking false news items to the press, disrupting campaign schedules, stealing confidential campaign files and planting provocateurs in the ranks of organizations expected to demonstrate at the conventions.